

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IS GOOD BUSINESS

Cities are highly complex organizations. Land areas and structures are used for an endless variety of purposes, which are made possible through local policies, ordinances and an extremely complex physical system. A city's physical system may consist of streets, water lines and storage facilities, wastewater lines and treatment facilities, storm facilities, parks, public buildings such as schools, post office, city hall, fire stations and other infrastructure. Not only is each service actively provided by the community complex and important as a separate service, but each activity interacts in many ways with one or more of the other functional elements of the community.

Community problems that exist today can seldom be solved individually or in isolation because of the complex and interrelated character of our cities. Coordinating community development or redevelopment is the responsibility of the local government. Infrastructure and service improvements provided by local government affect the daily lives of all citizens, develops community character, and assists in stimulating or delaying the development of privately owned land. Approximately one half (1/2) of developed land in most municipalities is in public ownership; streets usually contain the majority of this total. Because of the dedication of streets by private land owners through the platting of property the city has the obligation and opportunity to influence and regulate the overall design pattern of the community as well as other physical developments by the private sector.

The process by which a local government establishes long-range general policies for guiding growth and development of the community in a coordinated and unified way, is called Comprehensive Planning. The development of a comprehensive plan with implementation procedures provides the only workable means for permitting the local government to fulfill all of its coordinating responsibilities relevant to physical development. In particular, coordination and cooperation between various departments within a municipality, such as public works, parks and recreation, library services, and fire and police protection are important. Other public and quasi-public agencies outside of municipal government, such as local school boards and utility companies, are all directly concerned and affected by physical development. Providing these departments and agencies a context into which each one can fit its own plans and programs is in the development of a comprehensive plan. Coordination among the various public activities will be enhanced so that all can and should be working toward the same vision of the desirable future form of the municipality as established by the elected officials.

Substantial savings in acquisition, development, and maintenance costs by the public can be achieved through utilizing the coordinative opportunities of the comprehensive plan. The plan makes it possible to eliminate the duplication of facilities, and it encourages the joint use of common facilities. Often joint usage of a facility can be accomplished at a substantially lower cost than if two separate facilities were to be built and operated. Office buildings constructed and used jointly by city and county government is one effective way to save money. Another way, is jointly acquire adjacent park and school sites and arrange for their joint and complementary use.

In addition to governmental coordination, the comprehensive plan coordinates public and private development. The plan minimizes conflicts between different land use types while maximizing the benefits of public investment. With respect to utility improvements, the specific size and location of future water lines, wastewater lines, and storm drainage facilities can be calculated based on planned land uses. In the absence of a comprehensive plan, the infrastructure can be economically designed according to actual rather than potential need.

Improvement or development of the local street system is based on the condition of streets, adopted subdivision ordinance, and transportation needs anticipated in the comprehensive plan. When a city has streets that are unpaved or paved streets that are in poor condition in which elected officials would like to see improvements made, but realize that to accomplish such a job will take many years, the city would benefit by a comprehensive plan to inventory all streets, analyze the problems, and recommend a program to bring all streets up to standard. Such a program would research local priorities and financial resources in determining when and how the streets can best be improved in accordance with the city's existing ordinances. In the development of a comprehensive plan, a study will be made of different land uses, existing and projected, which will generate different travel patterns, which in turn affect the location, function, and capacity requirements of the street system. This process makes it possible to provide the most efficient future transportation system at minimum costs. In the absence of a plan, expensive and excessive improvements

generally have to be made in the street system to correct deficiencies, or unnecessary and expensive improvements will have been made and result in excess street capacities.

Community facilities such as schools, parks, libraries, police and fire stations are of vital importance to the quality of life and the general welfare of the community. The comprehensive plan is needed to identify in advance potential sites that can then be reserved or acquired. Site acquisition in advance results in significantly lower acquisition costs, and assures that future facilities are located so as to maximize their service to each neighborhood in the community. Planning or project scheduling permits the community to purchase needed land parcels for facilities and rights-of-way well in advance of construction of private buildings that later, if improperly located, might have to be purchased and demolished.

It is also more expensive to provide an addition to a major community facility than to build the larger facility initially. Some communities construct all public buildings in advance of need as a matter of course. This is part of the formal planning process in which population estimates are used to project the need for public facilities of various sorts, where projects are given a priority in a capital improvement program and are completed in advance of the time that the ultimate need materializes.

There are obvious economic benefits provided by developing a comprehensive plan, where a community is growing and need to expand facilities or not growing and need to improve recognized deficiencies. Almost every growing city is plentifully supplied with instances in which money would have been saved if we have planned or if we had done it another way or if we had done something else instead.

The city can achieve the most efficient and effective use of public resources through comprehensive planning. With established project priorities elected officials can prevent unwise expenditure of funds, which means that more money is available for extra or better services and facilities. Money saved through the comprehensive plan is not a goal in itself, but rather a supplementary attribute to be gained in the process of achieving the quality of life desired by the local citizens.

The Concept of Comprehensive Planning

The comprehensive plan can be characterized as short-range, long-range, comprehensive and general. It is short-range in that it deals with existing pressing problems. It is long-range in that it deals with projects 20 to 30 years into the future. It is comprehensive because it encompasses all geographical parts of the community and all the functional elements that bear on physical development. It is general because the plan designates only the general location, character and extent of the major physical elements of the community, but detailed enough to be clear in directing city policies.

Some of the most noticeable features in distinguishing characteristics of a comprehensive plan are as follows:

The Comprehensive Plan Should:

1. Focus on physical development, but take into account the social and demographic characteristics of the community.
2. Be long-range.
3. Be comprehensive.
4. Be general, but with sufficient detail to develop specific programs and projects.
5. Clearly relate the major physical design proposals to the basic policies of the plan.
6. Be in a form suitable for public debate.
7. Be identified as the City's Plan as well as that of the City Council.
8. Be available and understandable to the public.
9. Be designed to capitalize on its educational potential.
10. Be amendable.

Phase Two of Comprehensive Plan

Just having a planning document on your desk or on a shelf will not accomplish a thing. The city council must accept the documents and its plan and recommendations as theirs. They must follow it and implement the recommendations beginning with the first priority. Should there be an insurmountable obstacle to the first priority, then the council should keep that as a priority, but move to the second and then to the third, etc. Should something occur that removes the obstacle to the first priority, then it should be picked up. They must initiate action, and as action begins to take place, the public will see that the council is accomplishing objectives toward the goals that were established.

The city needs to keep track of their actions. The following chart shows one very simple method of tracking each activity taken to accomplish a specific objective of one specific goal. This chart should be duplicated for each activity of each objective toward accomplishing each goal.

Implementation of Goals and Objectives

Goal No. 1 Description: _____

Objective No. 1 Description: _____

Specific Activity to be undertaken: _____

Council Priority No. _____ Date Assigned: _____

Person assigned monitoring responsibility: _____

Date of Action

Action Taken and Who Took that Action

Council Approved Completion: _____

Date: _____ Comments _____